

One-fourth of Washingtonians find commute more sluggish

By: **Brian Hughes**
Examiner Staff Writer
July 22, 2010

Commutes average 35 minutes for 16 miles, survey shows

A quarter of commuters in the Washington area say their daily treks have become even worse in the last year, a survey released Wednesday shows.

Heavier congestion is the main culprit, according to the report by Commuter Connections, a network of transportation groups coordinated by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. But road construction, crowded trains and buses, and slower trips were also cited as common factors for sluggish travel.

However, more than 60 percent said their commutes were about the same as a year ago, and the average commute -- 35 minutes or 16 miles -- is generally the same as recent years.

But that is little consolation for agitated drivers stuck on the Capital Beltway for hours at a time.

Fairfax Circle's Jess Robinson burns 40 minutes most days driving to his office in the District -- a trip that would be even longer if he didn't carpool.

"It's horrible, it's just overwhelming, it's everywhere," he said of traffic. "People in Maryland go to Virginia. People in Virginia go to D.C. People in Maryland go to D.C. It's in every direction, and the roads are overwhelmed."

And ironically, many say efforts to alleviate traffic are actually making it worse, at least in the short term.

"The biggest problem with D.C. traffic is the construction," added Nina Larson, who forgoes her lunch hour so she can leave her Springfield home for Dupont Circle later in the morning. "Sometimes it seems like every road you try to go down you'll hit a construction zone."

Fed up with the daily crawl, she moved from Germantown to the Northern Virginia suburbs mainly to shed an hour from her drive.

The survey also shows public transit use in the outer Washington region is lagging that of the inner, urban areas. About three-fourths of commuters in Loudoun, Prince William and Frederick counties typically drive alone, while just 7 percent use bus or train.

In comparison, 35 percent of Washingtonians and Alexandria and Arlington county residents use public transportation regularly.

The study found a potential for a half-million new teleworkers in the region, but half of those surveyed said their employer doesn't allow the setup. Still, teleworking has increased 6 percent in the last three years, largely because the federal government has pushed the initiative.

Washington Examiner Intern Liz Essley contributed to this report.

bhughes@washingtonexaminer.com

Read more at the Washington Examiner:

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/local/One-fourth-of-Washingtonians-find-commute-more-sluggish-1002403-98951764.html#ixzz0uQYm3LCj>